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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MUSCAT 000733

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TAGS: [UNGA](#) [OPDC](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [UNHRC](#) [KUNR](#) [IR](#) [MU](#)
SUBJECT: OMANI FM CONFIRMS SUPPORT FOR IRAN'S CANDIDACY TO
UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

REF: MUSCAT 701

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo. Reason: 1.4 (b, d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) FM Bin Alawi reiterated to the Ambassador on May 9 that Oman feels obligated to support Iran's candidacy to the UN Human Rights Council as part of an OIC agreement on a slate of 13 states. The Ambassador urged Oman to reconsider and warned of USG disfavor over its decision. End summary.

Supporting Iran As Part of Block Vote

¶2. (C) In a May 9 call on Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin Alawi, the Ambassador sought clarification of MFA Under Secretary Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi's recent comment that Oman would "probably" support Iran's candidacy to the UN Human Rights Council (reftel). Bin Alawi explained that Iran is seeking a seat as part of an OIC-supported bloc of Asia candidates, and that Oman would reluctantly support Iran only as part of that collective ticket. "We are unhappy with the Iranians, but cannot say anything. It is a group endorsement." Bin Alawi added that Oman would not be able to hide its opposition to Iran's candidacy in a vote against the bloc as a whole, stating that "our opposition would be known."

OIC, GCC Allegedly Also On Board

¶3. (C) Asked whether the OIC was firmly behind the bloc candidacy, Bin Alawi confirmed that it was. He stated that "we are stuck here," as the composition of the bloc candidacy had already been determined with Iran as just one of thirteen countries whose candidacies were at stake. Asked specifically whether the other five GCC states would vote for Iran, Bin Alawi affirmed that they would. Yet he did not rule out the possibility of a "surprise," as a result of differences between voting in the UN General Assembly and in blocs. He allowed that some states might verbally support the bloc but then vote against it. The FM noted that in the event one or more of the candidates on the OIC-endorsed slate were not approved in the initial round of voting, some governments that may have committed to vote in favor of the group might consider themselves relieved of that obligation. The Ambassador underscored that the specter of OIC support for a patently unqualified candidate is very disturbing to Washington.

Questioning Purpose of Human Rights Council

¶4. (C) Bin Alawi said that Oman was uncomfortable with the whole issue of the Human Rights Council, as it creates a burden on the UN to generate more reports, imposes financial burdens, and creates "controversial" issues, such as the United States' decision not to seek membership.

¶5. (C) In considering Oman's vote, Bin Alawi argued that political considerations could not be divorced from human rights issues. He noted that many countries oppose the laws of others on human rights grounds, noting European opposition to Sharia law. He further noted the case of the Iraqi government allowing Shia citizens to flagellate themselves during religious holidays, saying that some observers would consider that an issue of human rights. The Ambassador replied that those examples were far-fetched, whereas Iran's execution of minors, restriction on press and other freedoms, persecution of religious minorities, and use of torture were apparent to all. Bin Alawi agreed that such practices should not happen, but again described them as "political" concerns. He said that they should be considered isolated matters, and that only systematic violations of human rights such as Rwanda and Burundi should be dealt with by the UN. The Ambassador disputed the fact that political concerns could be so easily distinguished from human rights violations, and questioned how member states could be effective contributors to the Council without supporting and enforcing international principles on human rights.

¶6. (C) The Ambassador concluded the meeting by reiterating USG concern about Oman's voting stance, and warned Bin Alawi

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that Oman's position would not serve the purpose of the newly formed HRC or the cause of human rights around the world.

¶7. (C) In a May 7 lunch, the British Ambassador confided that Oman pledged its support for London's candidate, but said he was not aware that Iran was also running and doubted that any concern on that point was raised during Bin Alawi's recent visit to the UK.

GRAPPO